



Front Country Trails Multi-Jurisdictional Task Force

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AGENDA DATE: March 3, 2010

TO: Front Country Trails Multi-Jurisdictional Task Force

FROM: Front Country Trails Task Force Staff

Subject: **Front Country Trails Maintenance Update**

RECOMMENDATION: That the Front Country Trails (FCT) Multi-Jurisdictional Task Force receives a status report on FCT trail maintenance projects.

DISCUSSION:

This staff report provides an overview of the status of trail conditions on trails affected by the Jesusita fire and their current condition in the aftermath of above normal rain fall during the period of October 2009 through February 2010. An estimated 26 inches of rain fell in the Santa Barbara Front Country during this period. The Santa Barbara County Flood Control District reported totals of 23.79 rain for Gibraltar Dam (149% above historical average) and 29.04 inches for San Marcos Pass (137 % above historical average) to date.

Trail Status

Trail assessments completed by Forest Service staff and trail volunteers indicate that overall, all Front Country trails, including those trails within the Jesusita burn area, received less trail damage as a result of the rain than anticipated. Initial reports indicate that the trail maintenance efforts from the October Burn Area Emergency Response (BAER) projects provided significant protection to the trail infrastructure. As a result, the Jesusita trail from San Roque to Inspiration Point, Rattlesnake trail, and West Fork Cold Spring trail remained open to the public during this period. Trail damage or safety concerns that have occurred include a collection of small washouts across the trail, rock fall, small slides, and several downed trees and/or limbs. Some rilling or parallel soil loss down the trail tread did occur between drainage outlets. The rilling effect occurred primarily in areas where adjacent slopes received high intensity burning during the fire. The October 2009 work effort to install enlarged rolling dips throughout the burn area trails was highly successful in minimizing soil erosion by moving water off the trail through a system of water drainage features. By converting waterbars in to large rolling

dips an additional trail maintenance benefit was realized by lowering the maintenance requirements to maintain the rolling dip and a reduction in maintenance frequency.

Tunnel Trail Assessment and Evaluation

A copy of the **Tunnel Trail Assessment and Evaluation**, January 25, 2010, prepared by Sonia Connors, P.E. is attached for your review. Ms. Connors, a local volunteer and Professional Engineer, developed a system to evaluate the newly constructed drainage structures as well as other areas of concern on the Tunnel Trail. During the period from October to January, Ms. Connors conducted field assessments using side by side comparison photographs. Ms. Connors photographed 89 sites along the trail. Each assessment took place immediately follow the three major rain events. Her report states, "After evaluating this trail, it was observed that the Tunnel Trail is easily passable though with a greater rock fall consideration. There are considerable amounts of erosion . . . however there have been no catastrophic failures or slides". Ms. Connor's report acknowledges that the trail is not to standard. Since large sections of the trail no longer have any outsloping and are bermed to create a trough for the trail tread. This "U-shape" tread creates the only path for storm water to flow. The construction of water drains both large and small, achieved the short-term objectives by reducing the overall water flow and subsequent tread damage. Over the long-term, continued storm flows and the associated soil erosion will remain problematic on a trail where the trail tread cannot longer disperse water from out slope sheeting.

Trail Maintenance Projects

On January 16th, the three agencies hosted a trail maintenance day on two trails. Thirty-five volunteers met at the Santa Barbara Mission and car-pooled to the Jesusita and Rattlesnake trails. The primary focus of the day was to improve water control features on the Jesusita Trail, San Roque side and to repair tread damage, remove down limbs, and fill in washouts on both the Rattlesnake and Jesusita trails. The overall report from the work day was that with minimal work both trails are in satisfactory condition for continued use. At the end of the work day volunteers were treated to a barbeque meal courtesy of the **Santa Barbara Chicken Ranch**.

The three agencies will sponsor three upcoming sponsored trail work days, including **California State Trails Day on April 10th**, **National Trails Day on June 5th**, and **National Public Lands Day on September 25th**. The April 10th State Trails Day will focus on tread repair and slide removal on the Tunnel and West Fork Cold Spring trails. Interested volunteers can meet at the Santa Barbara Mission at 9:00 AM on that day to sign up and participate in a day of trail maintenance.

Public Information

The agencies, along with a network of trail volunteers, will continue to monitor the trails through the remainder of the rainy season. Additional trail work to address restoration needs will be ongoing now that we are approaching the end of the rainy season.

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The trail using public should be aware, that even though the trail system did not receive catastrophic or major trail damage, there are still areas where the trail tread width has been reduced and minor slides have crossed the trail. Rock fall can found throughout the trail system.

Trails in the burn area remain subject to erosion and periodic rock debris, and may present unsafe conditions during wet weather. Remaining on the designated trails will reduce the potential for damage and additional erosion. As a rule, staying off wet trails for three days after rain is always recommended to protect the trail structure.

Plans to open Tunnel, Tunnel Connector and the north side of the Jesusita trail

If subsequent rain events do not cause significant damage to the trails that are currently closed, it is anticipated that the three agencies will recommend the re-opening of the Tunnel, Tunnel Connector and the north side of the Jesusita trail in late March or early April. All three trails will be evaluated prior to opening.

Submitted By: Kerry Kellogg, Recreation Specialist, Los Padres National Forest